

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-13

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3706

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2962

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, KS, US, JA

SUBJ: ASHMORE VISIT AND KIM TAE-CHUNG CASE

REF: SEOUL 2797

1. JAPANESE EMBASSY COUNSELLOR OKAZAKI INFORMED AMBASSADOR AND DCM MAY 8 THAT KIM TAE-CHUNG HAD GIVEN ACCOUNT OF HARRY ASHMORE'S CONCLUSIONS ABOUT KIM'S SITUATION TO DIET MISSION WHICH VISITED SEOUL LAST WEEK. ACCORDING KIM'S ACCOUNT, ASHMORE HAD TOLD KIM THAT FOLLOWING BROAD CONTACTS WITH ROKG AND AMERICAN EMBASSY, ASHMORE HAD BEEN CONVINCED THAT ROKG HAD INTENDED TO FREE KIM TO TRAVEL ABROAD IN FEBRUARY, BUT HAD BEEN DISSUADED FROM THIS COURSE BY INFORMATION THAT HIGH POLITICAL LEVELS OF GOJ DID NOT WISH TO SEE KIM TAE-CHUNG FREE TO RETURN TO JAPAN. KIM SAID ASHMORE HAD ALSO QUOTED SENIOR US EMBASSY OFFICIALS TO EFFECT THAT USG REGARD-DED ITSELF AS THIRD PARTY IN THIS AFFAIR AND THAT IF GOJ, WHICH HAS MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY, DID NOT WISH TO HAVE KIM RELEASED, THERE IS LITTLE THAT USG COULD DO.

2. OKAZAKI ALSO SAID THAT SEPARATE REPORT FROM TOKYO INDICATED THAT FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO SEOUL, ASHMORE TOLD FONMIN OHIRA THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED KIM TAE-CHUNG CASE WITH US EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SEOUL AND THAT HE HAD ALSO HEARD RUMORS THAT GOJ POLITICAL LEVEL

HAD PASSED WORD TO KOREANS THAT THEY DID NOT WISH TO SEE KIM TAE-CHUNG SET FREE.

3. AMBASSADOR SET OKAZAKI STRAIGHT ON HIS CONVERSATION WITH ASHMORE, SAYING THAT HE HAD TOLD ASHMORE THAT WHILE WE AWARE OF RUMORS FROM KOREAN SOURCES TO EFFECT THAT JAPANESE POLITICAL LEVEL HAD PASSED WORD TO ROKG THAT IT DID NOT WISH TO SEE KIM TAE-CHUNG FREE TO TRAVEL TO JAPAN, POSITION OF GAIMUSHO IS CLEAR THAT KIM SHOULD BE RELEASED AND PERMITTED TRAVEL ABROAD. AMBASSADOR REMINDED OKAZAKI THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED KOREAN RUMORS AND GAIMUSHO POSITION WITH AMBASSADOR USHIROKU, AND HAD BASED HIS STATEMENT TO ASHMORE ON USHIROKU'S ASSURANCES RE GAIMUSHO POSITION.

4. AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE JAPANESE POLITICAL LEVELS HAD IN FACT PASSED WORD TO ROKG WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY FORM BASIS FOR RUMORS OF TYPE CITED BY ASHMORE. OKAZAKI REMARKED THAT HE IN NO POSITION TO AFFIRM OR DENY BUT REMARKED THAT JAPANESE POLITICIANS VISIT ROK CONSTANTLY.

5. OKAZAKI LATER ACKNOWLEDGED TO DCM THAT JAPANESE POLITICIANS SOMETIMES DO THINGS OF WHICH THEIR EMBASSY IS NOT AWARE. ASKING THAT INFO BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE, HE SAID ONE EXAMPLE IS FACT THAT LEADERS OF DIET MISSION HAD CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER TANAKA PRIOR TO DEPARTING TOKYO. IN DISCUSSING WHETHER DIETMEN SHOULD URGE ROKG TO RELEASE TWO JAPANESE NOW BEING HELD UNDER EMERGENCY MEASURES FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH ANTI-ROKG STUDENT AGITATION, TANAKA HAD MADE REMARK TO EFFECT "THEY ARE COMMUNISTS--WHY HASSLE THE KOREANS ABOUT THEM?" OKAZAKI SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF THIS HAD BEEN PASSED TO KOREANS BUT RUEFULLY SURMISED THAT IT PROBABLY HAD.

COMMENT: TWO CONCLUSIONS EMERGE FROM ALL THIS: A) RUMOR CAMPAIGN, IN WHICH PROBABLY BOTH JAPANESE AND KOREAN POLITICIANS ARE INVOLVED, HAD UNDERMINED GAIMUSHO'S POSITION ON KIM TAE-CHUNG, AND B) ASHMORE, LIKE MOST KOREANS, PROBABLY DOES BELIEVE THAT JAPANESE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS SATISFIED TO SEE KIM REMAIN CONFINED IN KOREA.

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